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The Patent Office
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Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8QQ

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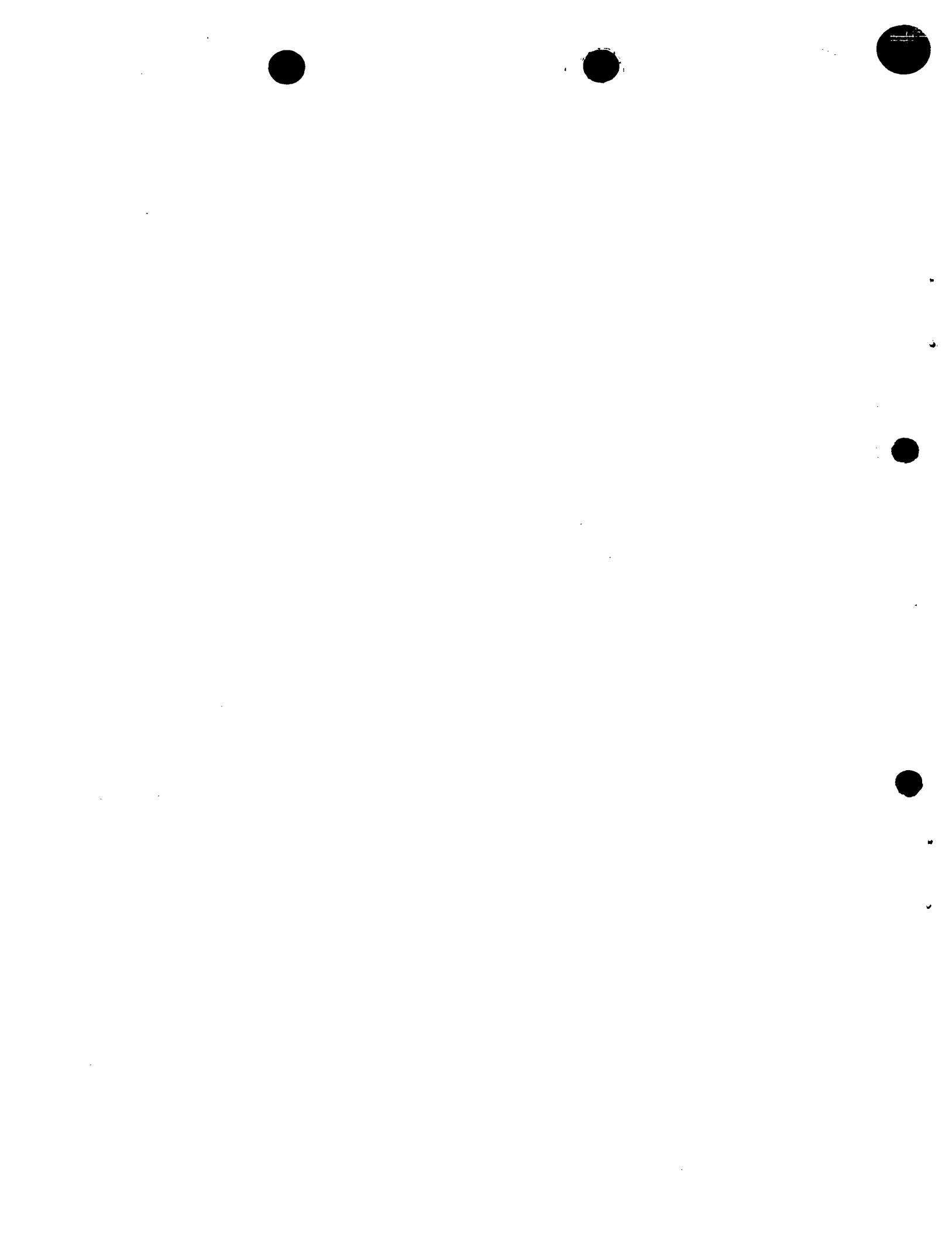
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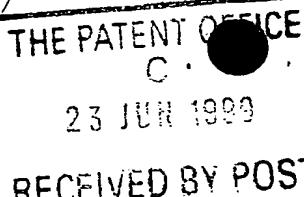
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Dated 24 July 2000



23JUN99 E456425-5 D02884
P01/7700 0.00 - 9914510.4**Request for grant of a patent**

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The Patent Office

 Cardiff Road
 Newport
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1. Your reference

P22196/EBA/SCR/NPA

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

9914510.4

23 JUN 1999

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (*underline all surnames*)
 Milliken Industrials Limited
 Wellington Street
 Bury
 LANCS
 BL8 2AY

6056/8301

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

United Kingdom

4. Title of the invention

"Method of Colouring Materials"

5. Name of your agent (*if you have one*)

Murgitroyd & Company

 "Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent
(including the postcode)

 373 Scotland Street
 GLASGOW
 G5 8QA
Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

1198013

 6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (*if you know it*) the or each application number

 Country Priority application number
(if you know it) Date of filing
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7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

 Number of earlier application Date of filing
(day / month / year)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if:

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
- b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
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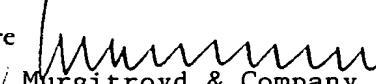
Continuation sheets of this form	-	
Description	9	
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Drawing(s)	6	L/G

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents	-
Translations of priority documents	-
Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)	-
Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77)	-
Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)	-
Any other documents (please specify)	-

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature 

Date 22 June 1999

Murgitroyd & Company

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

Norman Pattullo - 0141 307 8400

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1 **METHOD OF COLOURING MATERIAL**

1 The present invention relates to a new method of
2 colouring material, and especially to a new method of
3 dyeing woven or not woven material which provides the
4 material with an high visibility colour; to the dyed
5 material thus obtained and to the use of such material
6 in the manufacture of products to be used for example
7 in sports and especially in the covering of tennis
8 balls.

9

10 Traditionally, tennis balls were covered with a white
11 woollen felt. Several decades ago yellow felt was
12 introduced for use on match quality balls and from the
13 early 1970's balls covered with yellow felt became
14 increasingly popular. Today, the vast majority of
15 tennis balls are covered with yellow felt. Rule 3 of
16 the International Tennis Federation Rules of Tennis
17 states "The ball shall have a uniform outer surface
18 consisting of a fabric cover and shall be white or
19 yellow in colour..."

20

21 The felt used on tennis balls was previously made in
22 wool. Nowadays such felt is usually made of a mixture
23 of wool and nylon fibres at a ratio of about 50% each,
24 and it is desirable that the back side of the felt
25 (which is the side which will be stuck to the ball) be
26 made of a material which provides a good adhesion when

1 it is glued on the internal rubber sphere of the ball.
2 Usually such backing is made of cotton).

3
4 The tennis ball felt is then preferably dyed with a
5 fluorescent dyestuff. That is, the coloured felt will
6 absorb ultra-violet light and re-emit the absorbed
7 energy in the visible area of the spectrum. Most
8 tennis balls are now covered with felt that is dyed
9 fluorescent yellow and which produces peak reflectance
10 values of over 100% in the yellow area of the spectrum.

11

12 Few manufacturers produce fluorescent dyestuffs
13 suitable for both wool and polyamide fibres. To the
14 best of the Applicant's knowledge all the major tennis
15 ball felt manufacturers use the same class of dyestuff
16 albeit from different dyestuff suppliers. This class
17 of dyestuff gives a hue (colour) slightly to the green
18 side of yellow.

19

20 The cones in the human eye are mainly responsible for
21 daylight colour vision and these give the eye the
22 highest visual efficiency in the yellow wavelengths.

23

24 In addition to percentage reflectance three other
25 values can be plotted to identify a colour :

26

27 Lightness, with a scale of 0 to 100, 0 being black and
28 100 white;

29

30 Hue, which can be shown as a circle with red at 0
31 degrees and yellow, green and blue at 90 degree
32 intervals from this, the exact angle therefore
33 indicating the hue. If the lightness is visualised as
34 a vertical axis passing through the centre of the hue
35 circle, then a colour can be plotted in three
36 dimensional space; and

1 Chroma or colour saturation which can be shown as the
2 distance along a given radius from the centre of the
3 hue circle.

4

5 In the mid 1990's a high visibility felt (or HVF) was
6 produced using an increased percentage of dyestuff.
7 This felt (or HVF) has a higher level of saturation
8 (Chroma) but actually has a slight reduction in peak
9 reflectance and in lightness when compared to some
10 standard coloured felt. A method has now been found
11 which allows the production of coloured felt for tennis
12 balls having enhanced visibility properties over the
13 prior art.

14

15 The invention also provides a method of dyeing material
16 which produces an Ultra High Visibility (UHV) felt
17 which mitigates shortfalls of HVF.

18

19 More particularly, the invention provides a method of
20 colouring material which comprises contacting said
21 material with a bleaching agent prior to or
22 simultaneously with contacting said material with a
23 dyestuff providing said colour.

24

25 Preferably the material to be dyed is made of a mixture
26 of fibres of different nature, as, for example, a
27 mixture of wool and polyamide fibres.

28

29 It is also preferred that the material be a felt and
30 more particularly a felt suitable for the covering of
31 tennis balls, such as a felt made of wool and polyamide
32 fibres. In cases where a mixture of fibres are present
33 it is recommended to contact the material also with a
34 partitioning agent in order to eliminate or reduce the
35 difference in uptake of the dyestuff between the
36 different types of fibres. The bleaching agent, which

1 is preferably a reduction bleaching agent, whitens the
2 initial colour of at least one of the fibres.

3

4 Preferably the liquor ratio used to run the machine is
5 in the range between 6:1 and 8:1.

6

7 It is further preferred that the pH is adjusted
8 preferably between 4.2 and 4.5 by using, for example,
9 formic acid. The temperature is then raised to a
10 suitable temperature, for example about 45°C and held
11 for a period of, typically, 3 minutes to be able to
12 check and if necessary adjust the pH.

13

14 A wide range of suitable partitioning agents are
15 available depending for example upon the nature of the
16 material to be treated. However the partitioning agent
17 sold under the Trade Name BASOPAL NA by BASF has
18 demonstrated good results. The concentration of
19 BASOPAL NA recommended is about 0.5 grams per litre of
20 liquor.

21

22 It is further preferred that the bleaching agent and,
23 if appropriate, the partitioning agent be contacted for
24 a reasonable time with the material prior to the dyeing
25 step being executed.

26

27 It is further preferred that the bleaching agent be
28 added simultaneously or quasi-simultaneously with the
29 partitioning agent.

30

31 The bleaching agent preferably used is the one sold
32 under the Trade Name LUFIBROL FW by BASF. The amount
33 of LUBRIFOL FW is advantageously about 2% of the weight
34 of fibre.

35

36

1 It is further preferred to use a yellow dye, as this
2 colour is highly desirable for the manufacture of
3 tennis balls. The preferred yellow dye which can be
4 used according to the invention is the one sold under
5 the Trade Name NYLOMINE FLAVINE C-7G dyestuff by BASF.
6 The dyeing process can be performed according to the
7 recommended practice. A typical method is to add the
8 dyestuff to the material and the liquor according to a
9 recommended concentration and the recommended
10 temperature is then raised and held for some time at
11 this temperature before rinsing.

12

13 The invention also relates to the dyed material
14 obtained according to the method of the invention which
15 is coloured, preferably in yellow, and displays
16 enhanced visibility properties. The invention also
17 relates to the coloured felt itself which displays
18 enhanced visibility properties.

19

20 The invention further relates to the use of coloured
21 material dyed according to the method of the invention
22 in the manufacture of articles such as sporting
23 articles and more specifically tennis balls.

24

25 The present invention will be now further described
26 with reference to the following, non-limiting example.

27

28 **Figure 1** shows the reflectance curves of two prior art
29 felts (Nos 2 & 3) compared with the ultra high
30 visibility (UHV) felt (No 1) of the invention.

31

32 **Figure 2** shows the reflectance curves of two other
33 felts (Nos 4 & 5) produced by the Applicant and
34 compared with the UHV felt (No 1) of the invention.

35

36 **Figure 3** shows the same data as **Figure 2** but the data

1 used to produce the curves are generated by the
2 International Tennis Federation on their
3 spectrophotometer.

4

5 **Figure 4** shows the saturation (chroma) of the UHV felt
6 (No 1) of the invention compared with the four prior
7 art felts (Nos 2 to 5) used in Figures 1 to 3.

8

9 **Figure 5** shows the lightness of the same five felts
10 used in Figure 4.

11

12 **Figure 6** is an attempt to illustrate the position on
13 the colour circle by both chroma and hue of the five
14 samples used in Figures 1 to 3, 4 or 5.

15

16 **Example 1**

17 Obtention of an ultra high visibility yellow felt
18 according to the method of the invention

19

20 The felt used in this example is a material having an
21 back surface made mainly in cotton and an external face
22 made of a wool and polyamide fibre felt. Only the
23 external surface made of wool and polyamide felt needs
24 to be coloured. Wool and polyamide are present in a
25 respective ratio of about 6/4 with respect to the
26 weight of wool and polyamide fibres. The amount of
27 cotton fibres in the material represents about 15 % of
28 the total weight of the material.

29

30 The felt is dyed using acid dyes in piece form using a
31 Softflow jet dyeing machine which is run at a liquor
32 ratio of between 6:1 and 8:1. The liquor is the
33 liquid in which the material is wetted before the
34 addition of the dyestuff. In most cases and in
35 particular in this example the liquor is water.

36

1 The dyeing method used in this example is as follows:-
2 - The felt is entered into the machine cold and
3 the liquor ratio as indicated above;
4 - The pH is adjusted between 4.2 and 4.5 with
5 formic acid;
6 - The temperature is raised to 45°C and held for 3
7 minutes whilst checking pH;
8 - 0.5 grams per litre of BASOPAL NA (BASF) and 2%
9 by weight of fibre of Lufibrol FW (BASF) are added
10 through the dosing system; and
11 - the machine is run for 5 minutes at 45°C.
12 The following dyeing method is then applied:
13 - 1.6% by weight of fibres of NYLOMINE
14 FLAVINE C-7G dyestuff is added through the
15 dosing system during a period of 2 minutes;
16 - the temperature is raised at a rate of
17 1.8°C per minute to 95°C and the machine is
18 run for 30 minutes at this temperature;
19 - the temperature is decreased to 40°C at a
20 rate of 2.5°C per minute; and
21 - the felt is rinsed twice with fresh water
22 and unloaded from the machine.

23

24 **Comparative data**

25

26 The colour characteristics of the felt dyed according
27 to the above described method are shown in Figures 1 to
28 6. Except for Figure 3, all data were measured by the
29 Applicant using CIE (Commission Internationale
30 d'Eclairage) CIELAB formula at a 10 degree reflectance
31 angle using standard D65 illuminant.

32

33 Figure 1 shows reflectance curves of an UHV yellow felt
34 made according the method described in Example 1 and of
35 two competing felts produced respectively by the
36 companies Tretorn Sport and Penn Racquet Sports under

1 the Trade Name TRETORN TXT and PRO PENN. The felts used
2 to cover these balls are produced by Textech
3 Industries.

4

5 Figure 2 shows reflectance curves of the UHV felt used
6 in Figure 1 and of two other yellow felts, a "standard"
7 one and an "high visibility" one, both produced by the
8 company Milliken (Woollen Speciality Products) under
9 the respective Trade Name PLAYNE'S 14 and PLAYNE'S 45.
10 These felts are used in the manufacture of tennis balls
11 such as the ones sold under the Trade Names DUNLOP FORT
12 (standard) and SLAZENGER WIMBLEDON (high visibility).

13

14 Figure 3 shows the same data as Figure 2 but the data
15 used to produce the curves are generated by the
16 International Tennis Federation (ITF) on their
17 spectrophotometer. This independent measurement shows
18 good correlation with the Applicant's own data.

19

20 Figures 4 and 5 show respectively the chroma and the
21 lightness of the five tested felts.

22

23 Figure 6 shows a graph displaying the combination of
24 both chroma and hue performances of the five tested
25 felts.

26

27 As can be seen from Figures 1 to 6, the colour of the
28 felt of this example of the invention demonstrates
29 superior characteristics in all areas (i.e. chroma, hue
30 lightness and reflectance). The performances, when
31 compared to the closest prior art (i.e. the High
32 Visibility felt manufacture by Milliken), are
33 especially better for lightness and reflectance.

34

35 Figures 2 to 4 & 5 show that the high visibility felt
36 has a higher level of saturation (Chroma) but actually

1 has a slight reduction in peak reflectance and in
2 lightness when compared to the standard colour felt.
3 This disadvantage does not exist with the colour of the
4 UHV felt.

5

6 Thus, the UHV felt of the this example of the invention
7 can be used for the manufacture of yellow tennis balls
8 of improved colour properties, which is obviously
9 highly desirable to tennis players. Such improved
10 properties permit, during a game, a more easy and rapid
11 capture (catch) of the incoming moving ball by the eyes
12 of the tennis player and thus a quicker reaction and
13 positioning of the player with respect the ball.

14

15 The method and the product thus produced according to
16 the invention may be used for other purposes than
17 covering tennis balls. The high visibility of colour
18 material of the invention could also be used for
19 producing other items than tennis balls, especially
20 those where high visibility is important.

21

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Tennis Felt Reflectance Chart

Spectrophotometer Evaluation of Competing Products

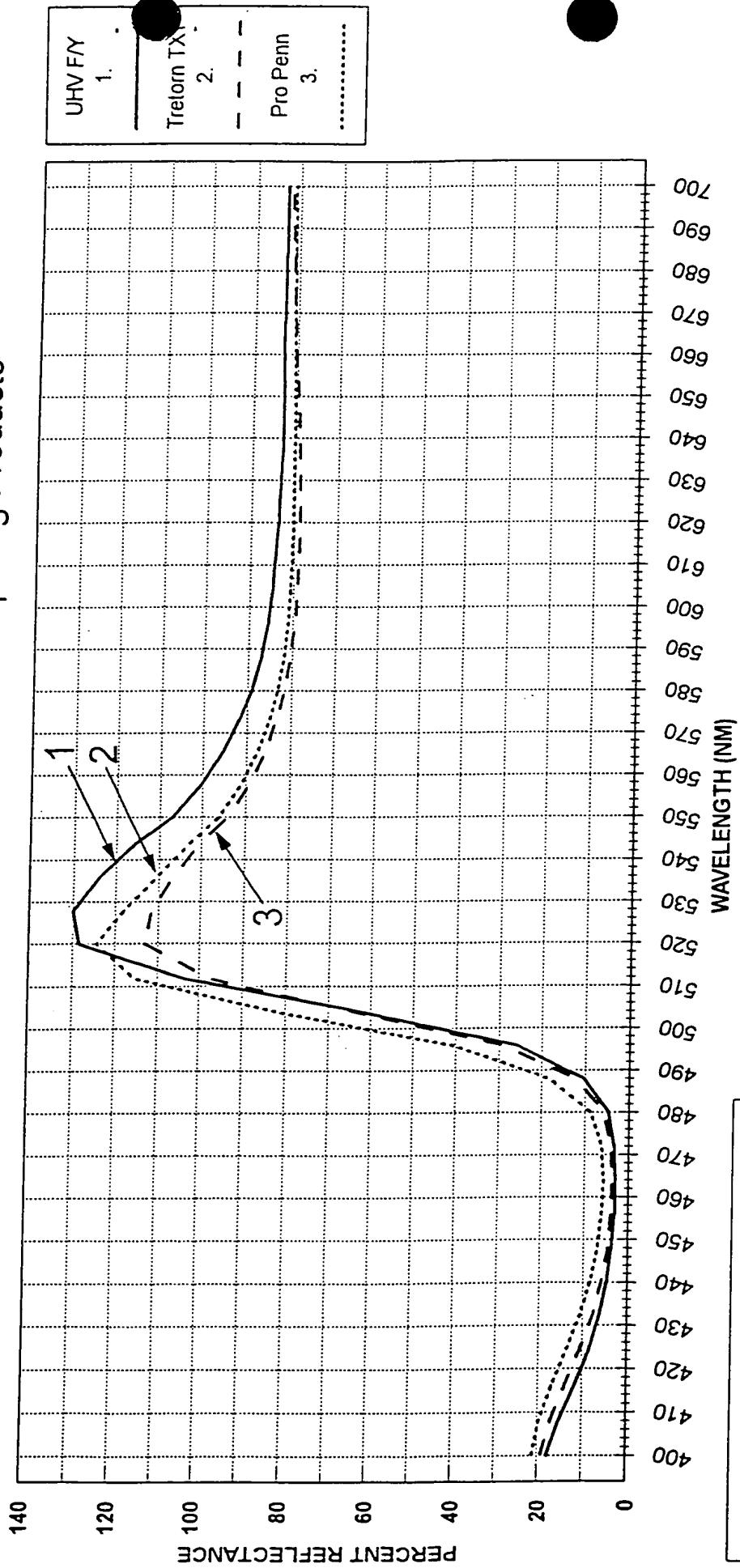
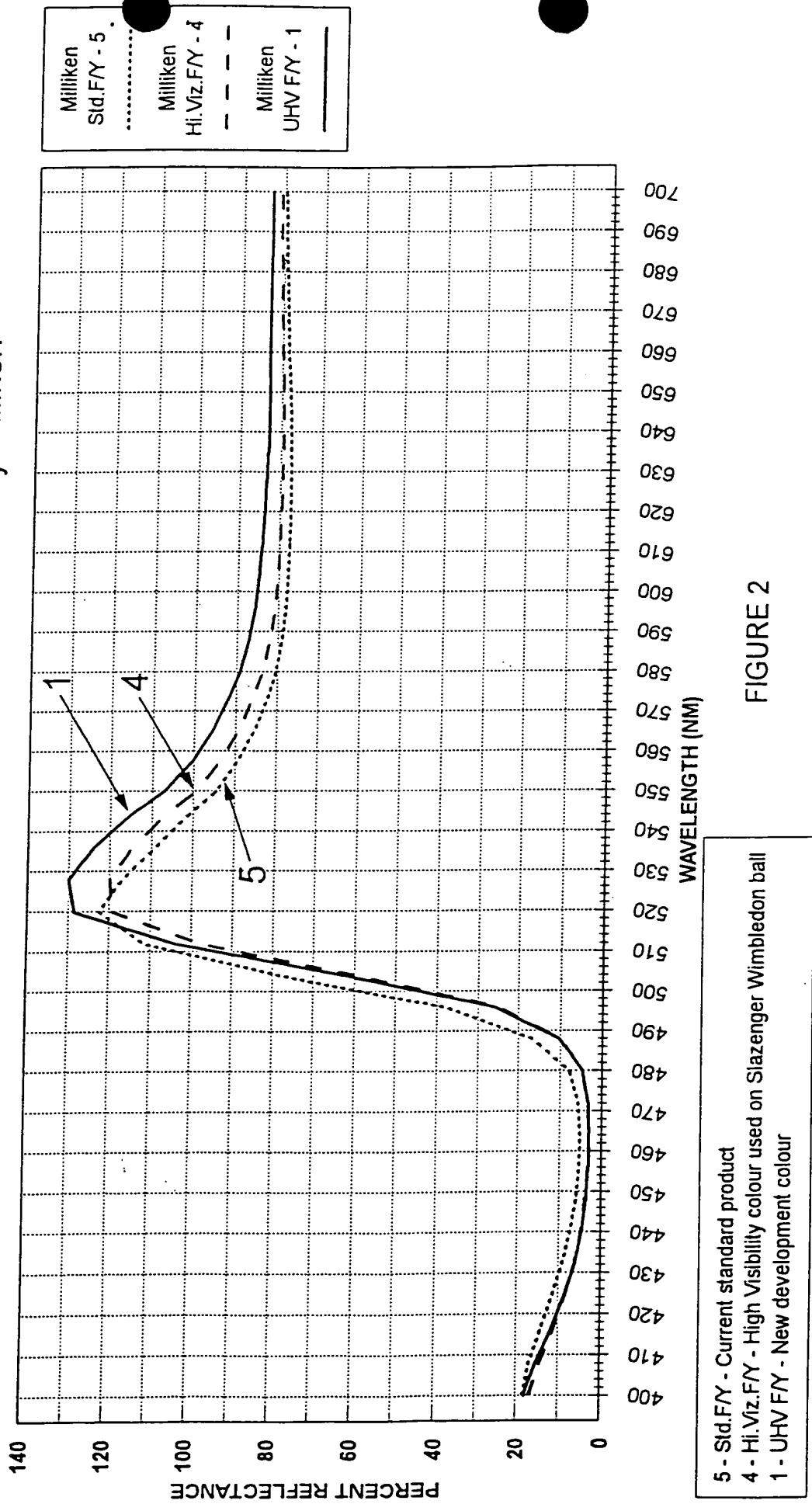


FIGURE 1

- 1 - UHV F/Y New Milliken development colour
- 2 - Tretorn TXT - Tretorn TXT ball from market
- 3 - Pro Penn - Pro Penn ball from market

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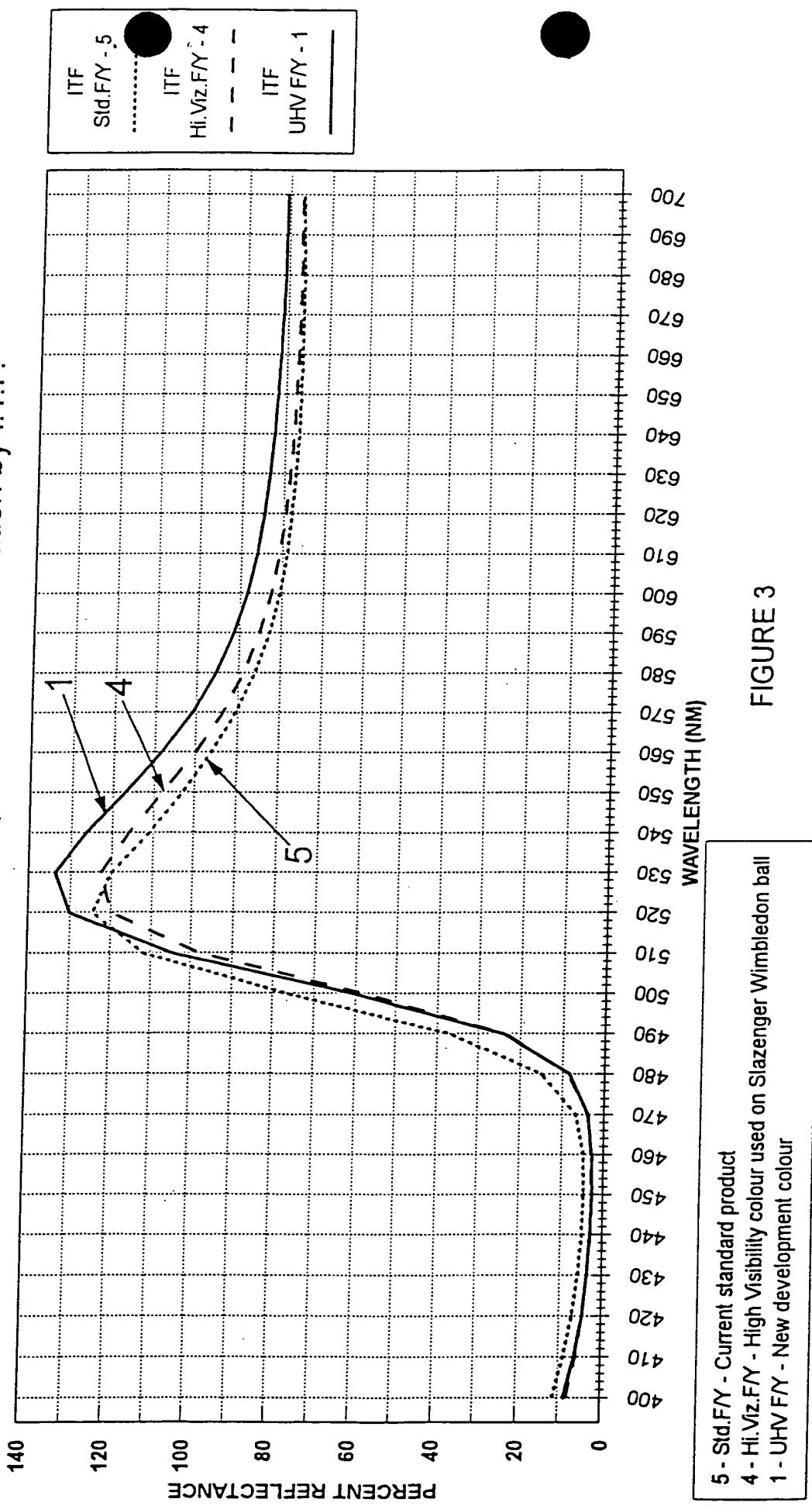
Milliken Tennis Felt Reflectance Chart Comparative Spectrophotometer Evaluation by Milliken



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Milliken Tennis Felt Reflectance Chart

Comparative Spectrophotometer Evaluation by I.T.F.



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Tennis Felt Comparison
Spectrophotometer Evaluation of Competing Products
Chroma (Saturation)

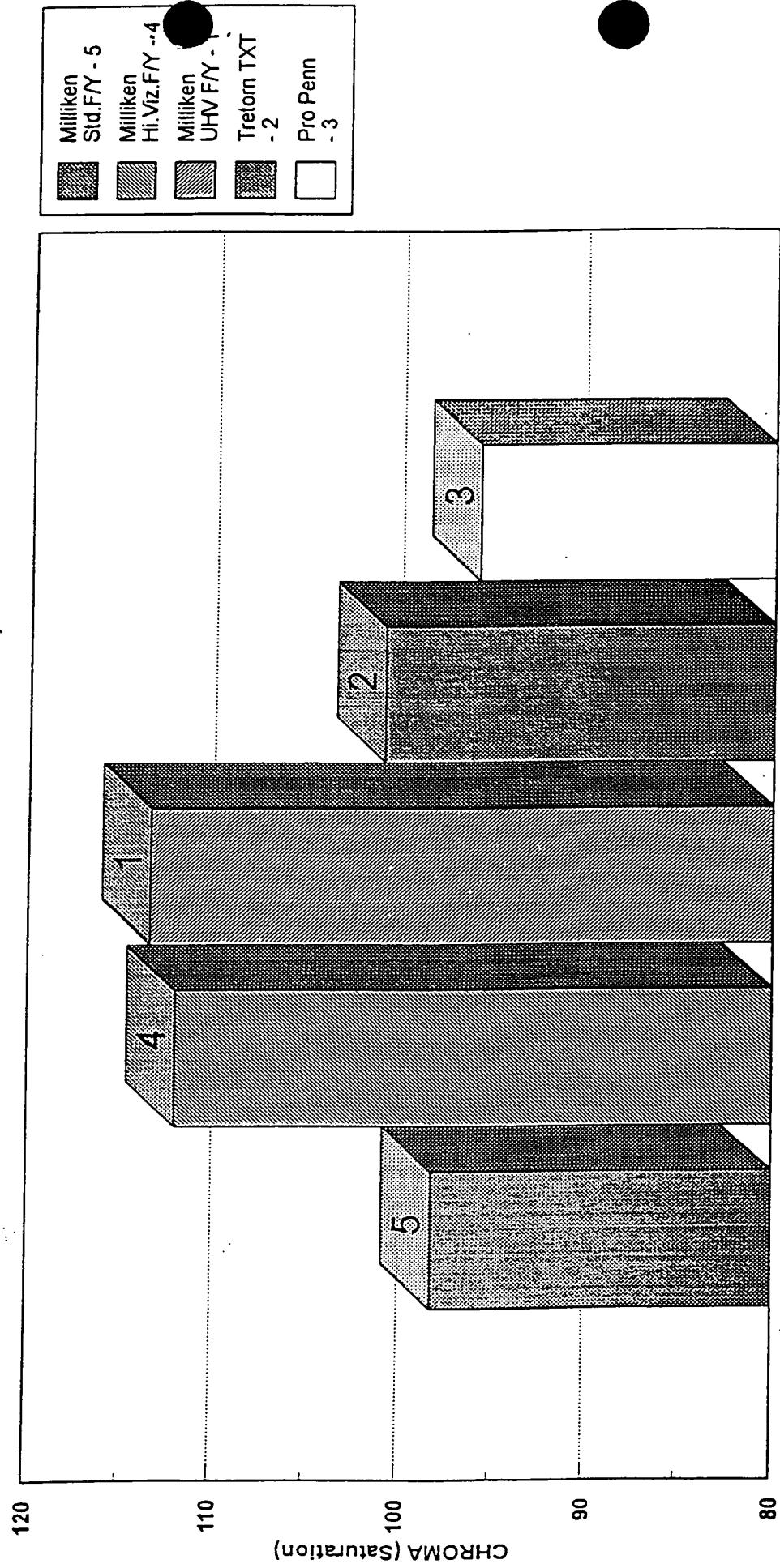


FIGURE 4

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Tennis Felt Comparison

Spectrophotometer Evaluation of Competing Products

Lightness

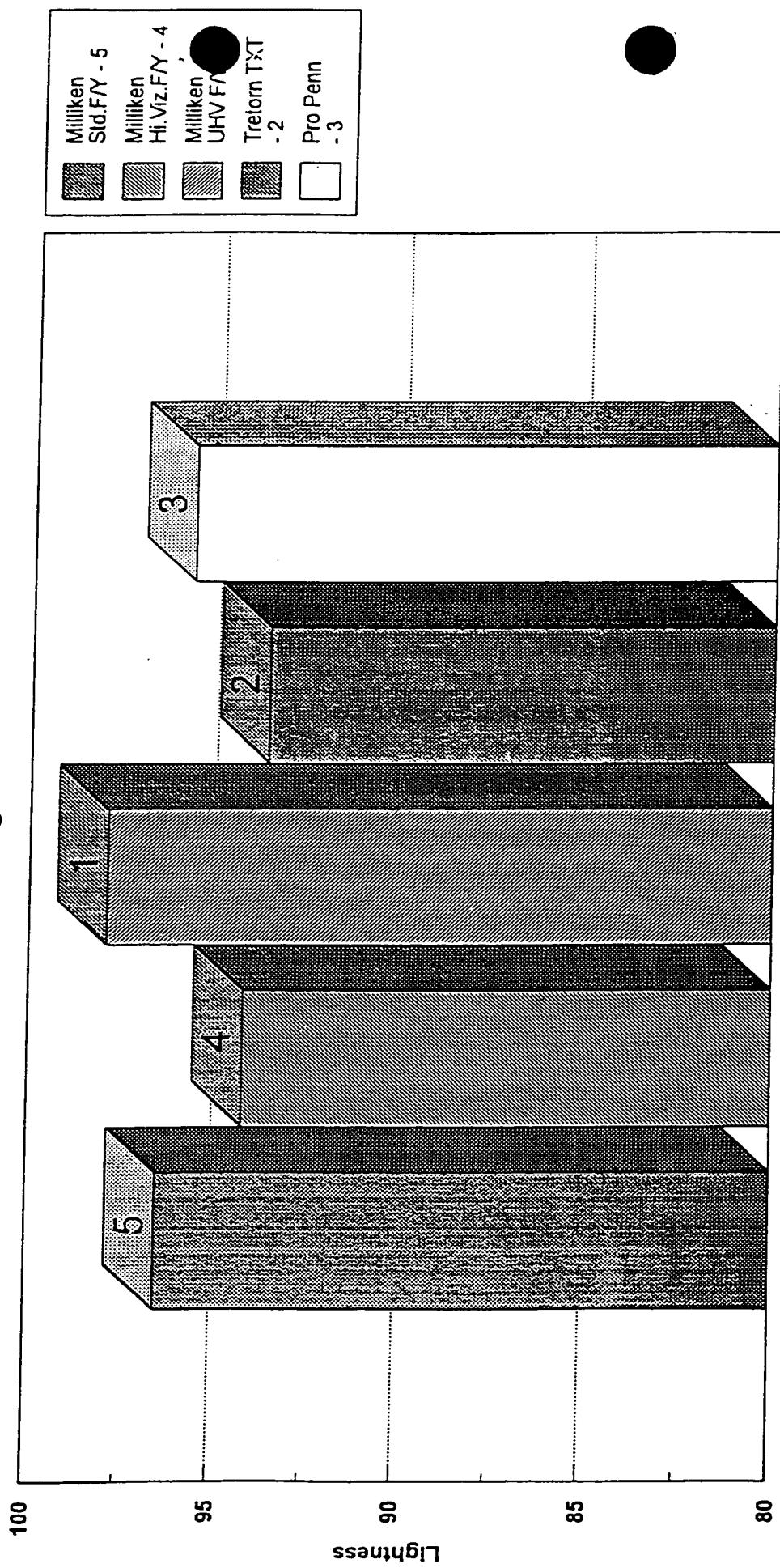


FIGURE 5

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PLOT TO SHOW COLOUR COMPARISON OF TENNIS BALL FELT
(CHROMA & HUE)

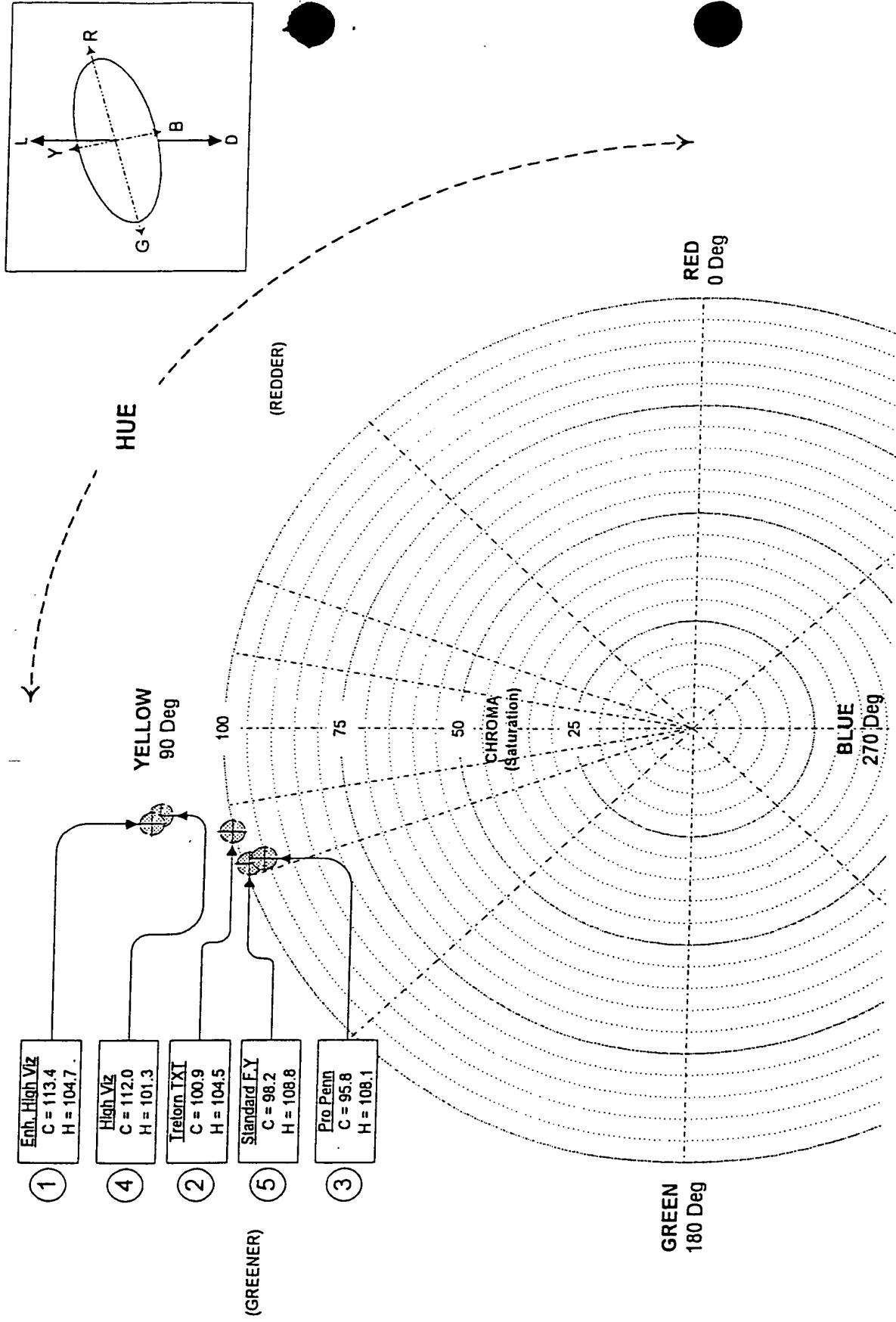


FIGURE 6

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